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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Letter dated 2 June 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Maldives to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), held at Malé, Republic of Maldives, from 12 to 14 May 1997, with the request that the Declaration be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 12 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Ahmed KHALEEL
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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ANNEX

Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, held at Malé from 12 to 14 May 1997

INTRODUCTION

The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina; the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck; the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, His Excellency Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral; the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom; the Prime Minister of Nepal, His Excellency Mr. Lokendra Bahadur Chand; the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif and the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Her Excellency Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga met at the Ninth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) at Malé, Maldives on 12-14 May 1997.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

2. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to SAARC and resolved to accelerate regional cooperation in order to realise the aims and objectives of the Association. They reaffirmed their commitment to the principles enshrined in the SAARC Charter, especially to the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in each others' internal affairs. They were convinced that regional cooperation was indispensable in an interdependent world for the realisation of the full potential of the South Asian region.

3. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the holding of the Commemorative Session of the Council of Ministers in New Delhi in December 1995 to mark the First Decade, on the theme "SAARC - Vision for the Second Decade". They observed that over the past decade SAARC has matured as an institution and the scope and volume of cooperative activities have expanded. They expressed satisfaction that in addition to continued cooperation in agreed areas, SAARC has now moved into the core areas of economic cooperation.

4. The Heads of State or Government noted that, in the twelve years of its existence, SAARC has seen progress in various fields of its endeavour. They directed that a Group of Eminent Persons (GEP) be constituted, with distinguished backgrounds in activities pertaining to regional cooperation, comprising of one representative from each Member State, with the discretion of each Member State to appoint an additional representative. This Group, to which the SAARC Secretary-General will be invited, will undertake a comprehensive appraisal of SAARC, and identify measures including mechanisms to further vitalise and enhance the effectiveness of the Association in achieving its objectives. They further decided that the Group may develop a long-range vision and formulate a perspective plan of action including a SAARC Agenda for 2000 and Beyond which will spell out the target that can and must be achieved by the year 2020. The Group may report to the Heads of State or Government at the Tenth SAARC Summit.

5. With a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the role and functioning of the Secretariat, the Heads of State or Government agreed to amend Article V (1) of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Secretariat and decided that the tenure of the Secretary-General, with immediate effect, shall be for a non-renewable term of three years.

6. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their determination to reinforce the unity and cohesion of SAARC. With the objective of enhancing regional solidarity and promoting overall development within SAARC, the Heads of State or Government encouraged, under the provisions of Articles VII and X of the Charter, the development of specific projects relevant to the special individual needs of three or more Member States.

7. They agreed that a climate of mutual accommodation and purposeful cooperation was needed to impart further impetus to the SAARC process during the second decade of SAARC in order to address the developmental challenges facing the region.

ENHANCING POLITICAL COOPERATION

8. The Heads of State or Government recalled their commitment to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding and, recognising that the aims of promoting peace, stability and amity and accelerated socio-economic cooperation may best be achieved by fostering good neighbourly relations, relieving tensions and

building confidence, agreed that a process of informal political consultations would prove useful in this regard.

ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN SOUTH ASIA

9. The Heads of State or Government were unequivocal in their commitment to the eradication of poverty in South Asia at the earliest, preferably by the year 2002 A.D. through an Agenda of Action. They noted with satisfaction the establishment of a three-tier mechanism on poverty eradication and endorsed the recommendations of the two rounds of meetings under this mechanism hosted by India and Pakistan, respectively. They desired that the Ministers of Finance / Planning should meet again in the near future to give further impetus to this process.

10. In considering the Report of the Ministers of Finance/Planning, the Heads of State or Government agreed that effective implementation of poverty eradication programmes required a focus on greater participation of target groups in the formulation and implementation of such programmes through social mobilization. They, therefore, decided to designate 1997 as the "SAARC Year of Participatory Governance".

11. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the successful holding of the Micro-credit Summit in Washington, D.C. in February 1997 and its Declaration of support to launch a global campaign to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services, by the year 2000 A.D.

12. Recognising that micro-credit programmes have successfully demonstrated their usefulness toward achieving many goals of socio-economic upliftment, including the eradication of poverty and empowerment of women, the Leaders agreed to intensify endeavours in their respective countries so that the outreach of these programmes becomes widespread.

13. The Heads of State or Government were convinced that an enabling international environment to support poverty eradication efforts of the SAARC countries is an essential element in attaining success for these efforts. They urged all donor countries, international institutions and other bodies engaged in eradication of poverty to increase their support and assistance to these efforts.

ACCELERATION OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION

14. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the entry into force of the Agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) on 7 December 1995. They recognised the importance of achieving a free trade area

by the year 2001 A.D. and reiterated that steps towards trade liberalisation must take into account the special needs of the smaller and the Least Developed Countries and that benefits must accrue equitably.

15. While expressing satisfaction at the conclusion of the two Rounds of Trade Negotiations under SAPTA, the Heads of State or Government welcomed the decision to launch the Third Round of Trade Negotiations shortly. They agreed that preferential tariff concessions should cover products which are being actively traded amongst Member States. They further agreed that the Third Round should deepen tariff concessions along with the removal of non-tariff barriers and structural impediments in order to move speedily towards the goal of SAFTA.

16. The Leaders welcomed the holding of the First Meeting of the Commerce Ministers and the First SAARC Trade Fair in New Delhi in 1996 and noted the decision of the Commerce Ministers to meet annually. They further welcomed the offer of Pakistan to host the second SAARC Trade Fair to coincide with the SAARC Commerce Ministers' Meeting.

17. The Heads of State or Government agreed that the efforts to enhance trade and economic co-operation in the region would be further strengthened by initiating specific steps to promote and protect investment, increase complementarities in economic activities of Member States and other measures supportive of promotion of SAARC joint ventures. They also welcomed the offer of India to host a meeting on promotion and protection of investment and the offer of Pakistan to host a meeting on avoidance of double taxation. They also welcomed measures of cooperation in the areas of customs standardisation, arbitration and enhancing industrial economy and management.

18. The Heads of State or Government agreed that in intensifying economic cooperation the interests of smaller countries, especially the least developed among them, should be taken into account through the implementation of special measures in their favour.

19. The Heads of State or Government noted that inadequate communications facilities amongst the Member States were a major hindrance to closer economic co-operation. They stressed the importance of developing infrastructure and adequate communication networks among Member States to reinforce the process of economic co-operation. In this regard, they highlighted the need for the simplification of complex documentation procedures and transactional software to facilitate economic interaction across the region. They welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a Meeting of the Communication Ministers of the Member States.

20. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their determination to encourage the private sector in the region to contribute increasingly to the strengthening of intra-SAARC links in key areas of trade, investment and finance. They welcomed the decision by the SCCI to convene annually an Economic

Cooperation Conference in conjunction with the annual meeting of SAARC Commerce Ministers and SAARC Trade Fairs.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPA)

21. The Heads of State or Government emphasised the need to make the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) more effective through the selection of target-oriented and time-bound activities within an overall framework of enhanced co-operation among Member States. In this context, they noted that the Secretary-General had been authorised by the Council of Ministers to constitute a Group of Experts to review the IPA.

REGIONAL CENTRES

22. The Heads of State or Government noted that Regional Centres have an important role to play in harnessing the resources and capabilities within the SAARC region in addressing specific and shared concerns of Member States. They welcomed the decision of the Council of Ministers to establish a Human Resource Development Centre in Pakistan.

23. They stressed that Regional Centres should implement action and result-oriented programmes and highlighted the importance of rationalising the functioning of these Centres.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

24. The Heads of State or Government recognised that increased social and political awareness in the region had brought positive contributions to the issues of gender equality and empowerment of women. They further emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation to achieve the desired objective of bringing women into the mainstream of socio-economic development in the region. In this context, they emphasised the urgency to effectively implement the recommendations of the "Dhaka Resolution on Women", issued at the conclusion of the SAARC Ministerial Conference on Women and presented to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

25. Taking note of the mid-decade review of the SAARC Plan of Action on the Girl-Child, the Heads of State or Government expressed their determination to accelerate efforts at reduction of malnutrition and mortality rates, raising education and literacy rates, reduction of the proportion of early marriage among girls, and the postponement of the age of first pregnancy, thereby contributing to the increased welfare of the girl-child and reduction of population growth rates.

26. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to take urgent action to alleviate the situation of Girl Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (GCEDC), including those orphaned, disabled and/or exploited. In this context, they endorsed the recommendations made by the Council of Ministers, aimed at the creation of a socio-economic environment in the SAARC region which would provide equal opportunities to children from all economic sections.

27. Expressing grave concern at the trafficking of women and children within and between countries, the Heads of State or Government pledged to coordinate their efforts and take effective measures to address this problem. They decided that existing legislation in Member States should be strengthened and strictly enforced. This should include simplification of repatriation procedures for victims of trafficking. They also decided that the feasibility of establishing a Regional Convention on Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution be examined by the relevant Technical Committee.

CHILDREN

28. The Heads of State or Government expressed satisfaction that the annual reviews of the situation of children in SAARC countries for the years 1995 and 1996 revealed significant progress in reducing infant mortality and in enhancing the coverage of immunisation in the region. They stressed that sustained efforts should be made by Member States to consolidate the gains in these areas. In this regard, they welcomed the decision to designate Seventh December, 1997 and Eighteenth January, 1998 as "SAARC Polio Immunisation Days".

29. The Heads of State or Government resolved to implement appropriate policies at the national level to achieve the targets and objectives set out in the Rawalpindi Resolution issued at the end of the Third Ministerial Conference on the Children of South Asia held in August 1996, including the call to eliminate the evil of child-labour from the region by the year 2010 A.D. They called for stringent measures to protect children from all forms of exploitation. To this end, the Leaders agreed to set up a Study Group at an appropriate level to examine the social compulsions that create the problem.

30. They reaffirmed their commitment to improve the status of children in disadvantaged circumstances in the SAARC region. They recognised that the problems of these children are inextricably linked to the prevailing socio-economic conditions and problems of the region, and therefore, called for a holistic approach to address them. They expressed the need to formulate a Convention on Regional Arrangements on the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia in launching the SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child, from the year 2001 A.D. to 2010 A.D.

NUTRITION

31. Noting that malnutrition, often severe, is a serious concern in South Asia, the Heads of State or Government agreed to launch an Initiative on Nutrition aimed at promotion of availability of food of essential nutritional value to individual household and evolving policies for supplementing and fortifying essential micro-nutrients, deficiencies of which have affected the well being of the most vulnerable sections of the population, particularly women and children.

32. The Heads of State or Government emphasised that the provision of a safe, secure and clean environment was an essential pre-requisite for the welfare of the most vulnerable sections of society in the region, particularly for the proper growth and development of children, and agreed on the need for launching technology missions to develop low-cost, easily replicable technologies appropriate local conditions for sustainable harvesting of water, provision of clean drinking water and sanitation.

YOUTH

33. The Heads of State or Government welcomed the operationalization of the SAARC Youth Awards Scheme and noted that the Scheme will be reviewed in the near future with the purpose of expanding it. They also welcomed the initiative to organize Youth Camps in the region on various themes.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

34. Conscious of the continuing problems faced by disabled persons, the Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their resolve to continue the implementation of the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on Disabled Persons held in Islamabad in December 1993.

SHELTER

35. The Heads of State or Government emphasized that housing was a basic right of all people and reiterated their determination to sustain efforts to improve the condition of human settlements in the region, with a view to achieving the global objective of "Shelter for All by the Year 2000".

LITERACY

36. The Heads of State or Government recognised that illiteracy is one of the major causes impeding the development of the vast human resource potential of the region and a major factor contributing to the region's economic backwardness and

social imbalance. They noted that the Member States had observed "1996 as the SAARC Year of Literacy" and reiterated their commitment to continue endeavours to eradicate illiteracy from the region.

37. Recognising the resource, manpower and infrastructural constraints to the promotion of vocational and higher education in the region, the Leaders agreed that new and innovative methods like Open Learning and Distance Education can play an effective role in meeting regional needs in a cost effective and flexible manner. Accordingly, they agreed that the institutional facilities in such education available in the region should be utilised on a regional scale. The possibility of the creation of a Consortium of Open Universities in the region should also be explored.

ENVIRONMENT

38. The Heads of State or Government expressed concern about the continuing degradation of the environment in different parts of the world including the SAARC region. While recognizing that collective initiatives were required urgently to address the challenge posed by such degradation, they noted that unsustainable consumption patterns in the developed countries and widespread poverty in the developing countries are major factors contributing to ecological degradation in different parts of the world. In this regard, they noted that although both developed and developing countries were required to undertake specific initiatives to face environmental concerns, stress should also be laid on the acceleration of development in developing countries to enable them to face environmental challenges.

39. Reviewing the work carried out in the area of disseminating information on the problems of environmental degradation and their impact on the region, the Heads of State or Government expressed the urgent need for the implementation of the recommendations of the SAARC Regional Study on the Greenhouse Effect and its Impact on the Region, and the Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment. They welcomed the offer of the Maldives to host a meeting of the SAARC Environment Ministers to focus more directly on the environmental concerns of the region including the formulation of a Plan of Action for immediate implementation of recommendations contained in the two Studies, taking into account the recommendations made by the Meeting of the Environment Ministers in New Delhi in April 1997. The Leaders felt that the meeting may also consider the feasibility of drawing up a Regional Treaty on Environment in the context of existing international Conventions on the subject. They reiterated their view that Member States should take all necessary steps in vital areas such as sharing and developing scientific capabilities to protect and manage the environment.

40. The Heads of State or Government agreed on the urgent need for cooperation through exchange of information, strategies and technologies for combating pollution of air and water and for evolving common minimum standards which could be applied region-wide in this regard. Recognising the wealth of bio-diversity in the South Asian region and expressing concern at the threat of its progressive depletion through degradation and fragmentation, they affirmed their commitment to take steps towards the protection and conservation of these genetic resources. They noted that many areas rich in bio-diversity in South Asia lay along shared borders and agreed to cooperate in the creation of contiguous protected areas where identified. They also agreed to cooperate in the prevention of illegal trafficking in flora and fauna and devise an appropriate mechanism for this purpose, including the possibility of concluding a Convention. They decided that the meeting of SAARC Environment Ministers should be institutionalised henceforth as an annual event.

41. While expressing concern at the slow progress in the implementation of the Agenda 21, the Heads of State or Government called for the urgent implementation of the commitments, recommendations and agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. In particular, they also called for the early implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the adoption of a Protocol or another legal instrument for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries within an early timeframe, but not later than the year 2005 A.D.

42. The Heads of State or Government underlined the importance of projecting an effective, and coordinated collective position of SAARC at the forthcoming Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda 21. In this regard, they fully endorsed the New Delhi Declaration issued at the end of the SAARC Ministerial Conference on Environment held from 2-3 April 1997, as amended at the Eighteenth Session of the Council of Ministers.

TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

43. Recognising that terrorism and drug trafficking pose a serious threat to security and stability of Member States, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to combat these activities in the region. They emphasised the urgent need to complete enabling legislation in order to implement the SAARC Regional Conventions on Suppression of Terrorism and on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

44. The Heads of State or Government recalled the adoption of the 1996 UN Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism and urged all Member States to work towards its implementation. They called for international action to prevent the abuse of Refugee Conventions and to halt activities which help terrorist groups to collect funds for their activities in South Asia.

45. The Heads of State or Government noted the establishment of the SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) and the SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk (SDOMD) in Colombo. They agreed on the need to maintain regular flow of relevant information to enable the Monitoring Desks to function effectively.

46. The Heads of State or Government noted with appreciation the convening of the First SAARC Conference on Cooperation in Police Matters in Colombo during July 1996. They endorsed the outcome of the Conference, particularly, the call for sharing of expertise with regard to the different areas of police investigation and investigation of organised crime and drug related crimes. They welcomed the offer of the Maldives to host the second Conference in 1997.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

47. Noting that cooperation in the field of Science and Technology was imperative in ensuring the acceleration of the process of development in the region and recognising the progress made in this field, the Heads of State or Government emphasised the need to continue cooperation in this area, especially in facilitating research and exchange of information in the fields of bio-technology, genetic engineering, energy modelling techniques and low-cost housing and building technologies.

TOURISM

48. Emphasising that tourism plays an important role in promoting people to people contact in the region, the Heads of State or Government stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation with the aim of realising its full potential in the region. They were convinced that greater cooperation in this area would contribute to the enhancement of people-to-people contact within the region as well as to the economic development of Member States.

49. The Heads of State or Government noted that organised tourism in South Asia has not yet achieved its full potential, and recommended that appropriate measures to promote tourism be given priority, and in this regard, welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Colombo in 1997.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT

50. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their conviction that enhanced people-to-people contact would contribute to strengthening mutual understanding and goodwill among the people in the region. In this context, they noted the positive contribution made by SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and SAARCLAW.

51. They observed that SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships Scheme should be increasingly used to facilitate greater interaction among students, scholars and academics in the region.

52. The Heads of State or Government noted with satisfaction the inclusion of new categories of persons from different walks of life in the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme and believed that this would further promote people-to-people contact.

53. They noted the offer of Sri Lanka to host the First SAARC Film Festival in Colombo in 1998 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka.

54. The Heads of State or Government agreed that the SAARC countries possess enormous tourism potential that should be properly utilised for the benefit of the people of the region. In this context, they decided that the civil aviation authorities of Member States should meet in the very near future with a view to establishing direct air services between SAARC capitals which would promote people-to-people contact and encourage tourism. They welcomed the offer of Bangladesh to host the first meeting of the civil aviation authorities.

SOUTH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT FUND (SADF)

55. While expressing satisfaction that the South Asian Development Fund (SADF) had been established in June 1996 initially with its headquarters in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the Heads of State or Government recognised the need to make the Fund operational at the earliest.

PROJECTION OF COLLECTIVE POSITIONS

56. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to develop collective SAARC positions in international fora on issues of common concern, in order to enhance the international profile of South Asia as well as to enable Member States to articulate their position on such issues in a more effective manner. In this regard, they noted with satisfaction the collective SAARC positions finalised and presented prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, HABITAT II held in Istanbul in June 1996, and World Food Summit held in Rome in November 1996. They also expressed satisfaction with the formulation of a SAARC common position before the forthcoming Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implementation of Agenda 21.

SECURITY OF SMALL STATES

57. The Heads of State or Government recognised that small states, because of their particular vulnerabilities, require special measures of support from the international community for safeguarding their sovereign independence and territorial integrity. They further reaffirmed their view that such support should be firmly rooted in the scrupulous adherence to the UN Charter, the rule of law and strict adherence to universally accepted principles and norms related to sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all States irrespective of size. This, they emphasised, may be ensured by all countries either severally or collectively through the pursuit of appropriate action.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

58. The Heads of State or Government had wide ranging discussions on current international issues, particularly those that affect South Asia. In this context, reiterating their deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, the Heads of State or Government recalled that the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in October 1995 had highlighted the need to strengthen, revitalize and reform the Organization. They reiterated their support to the on-going process of restructuring and revitalizing the Organization and reaffirmed their resolve to make it a more effective universal instrument for addressing international issues on an equitable and democratic basis, taking full account of the interests and concerns of all states.

59. Addressing the question of reform of the United Nations, the Heads of State or Government laid particular emphasis on the principle of sovereign equality of States and on equitable geographical representation in regard to the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council. They recognised the need to make the Security Council more representative, democratic and transparent, so that it is better equipped to uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

60. The Heads of State or Government reiterated their firm commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and underscored the continued validity and relevance of these principles and objectives in the contemporary world. They expressed their deep conviction that the Movement's innate strength equips it to continue to play a most constructive role in laying the foundations of a new world order based on the rule of law, non-interference, equity and cooperation.

61. The Heads of State or Government while expressing support to the continuation of the peace process in the Middle East, expressed concern at the setback to the peace process and unleashing of violence against Palestinian people in occupied territories and the resulting threat to the peace process due to policies

of the Government of Israel in establishing and enlarging existing Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. They were convinced that the peace process should be continued by honouring previous commitments made by all parties involved. They also called for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of self determination and the establishment of a sovereign State under the leadership of PLO, their sole legitimate representative, which could co-exist with its neighbours in peace and harmony.

62. Noting that the end of the Cold War had created unprecedented opportunities in the field of disarmament, the Heads of State or Government recognised the need for the international community to pursue nuclear disarmament as a matter of highest priority. In this regard, they recognised the need to start negotiations through the Conference on Disarmament and to establish a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

63. While reiterating their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, the Heads of State or Government resolved to take all necessary steps to achieve this objective.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

64. The Heads of State or Government noted that current trends of globalisation and liberalisation were imposing a heavy burden on developing economies, in particular, the least developed countries (LDCs) which are becoming marginalised from the mainstream of the world economy. They also expressed concern over trends to erect new protectionist barriers by linking imports from developing countries to politically motivated social and environmental values and concerns, such as human rights. They observed that the impact of these trends is compounded by new challenges relating to issues of access to markets, capital and new technologies. They also noted with regret the overall decline in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) over the years which has contributed to the aggravation of the condition of the LDCs.

65. The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed the promotion of a non-discriminatory and multilateral rule-based global system of economic relations in order to engage the developing countries constructively and on the basis of reciprocal shared benefits in the process of liberalisation, as well as to assist them integrate into the global economy.

66. The Heads of State or Government called on the developed countries to assist the developing countries through the creation of a favourable and supportive global economic environment, in particular, through domestic action in their countries for purposes of accelerating investment flows to developing countries thereby generating a positive impact on the developmental efforts of developing countries as well as

assisting their integration into the multilateral trading system. They also called on the developed countries to substantially reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers and desist from restrictive trade practices, which would negatively affect the access of developing countries to global markets.

SPECIAL MEASURES FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED AND LAND-LOCKED COUNTRIES

67. The Heads of State or Government emphasised the need for priority action on various international development commitments, such as the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action for LDCs for the 1990s.

68. While noting with deep concern that economic growth in the Least Developed and Land-Locked Countries is not progressing well, the Heads of State or Government stressed the need to take special measures for accelerating the process of development. They emphasized the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for ensuring accelerated and sustained economic growth in developing countries particularly in the Least Developed Countries. They stressed on the need for adequate resources to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes in SAARC countries.

69. The Heads of State or Government emphasised that the review of the criteria for the determination of LDC status for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly this year, must take into account the special significance of the extent and magnitude of incidence of poverty in the poorest countries and the special vulnerabilities of small island states.

DATES AND VENUE OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT.

70. The Heads of State or Government accepted with deep appreciation the offer of the Government of Sri Lanka to host the Tenth SAARC Summit. They further decided that the Eleventh and Twelfth Summits will be held in Nepal and Pakistan, respectively.

71. The Heads of State or Government of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka expressed their sincere appreciation for the exemplary manner in which the President of the Republic of the Maldives had conducted the Meeting and guided its proceedings in his capacity as Chairman. They expressed their deep gratitude for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and the people of the Maldives and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.